

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /070 W

----- 021630

R 261200Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO AMCONSUL MADRAS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4268

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2914

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN KERALA

REF: MADRAS 391 (NOTAL)

1. REFTEL REPORTS THAT ELECTIONS MIGHT BE HELD IN KERALA THIS SUMMER AND THAT "EVERYTHING WAS GOING FINE FOR THE PM IN KERALA". LATTER THEME IS SUPPORTED BY POLCOUNSELOR'S CONVERSATIONS IN TRIVANDRUM LAST WEEK "ELECTIONS THIS SUMMER", HOWEVER, WERE EXPECTED BY VERY FEW. EVERYONE EXCEPT CPM LEADER E.M.S. NAMBOODRIAPAD AGREED THAT THERE IS STRONG APPROVAL OF THE EMERGENCY AND THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY WHICH HAS FOLLOWED IN ITS WAKE IN KERALA. DISGUST WITH YEARS OF WORK STOPPAGES, VIOLENCE, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND STUDENT UNREST WAS WIDESPREAD AND FEW WANTED A RETURN TO PRE-EMERGENCY POLITICS. NEWSMEN, KERALA GOVT MINISTERS, PROFESSORS, AND NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION POLITICIANS ALL AGREED THAT IN ANY ELECTION A CONGRESS-DOMINATED COALITION WOULD SWEEP THE POLLS. CPM CONTINUES TO PROTEST THAT IT WOULD WIN AND THIS IS WHY MRS. GANDHI HAS POSTPONED ELECTIONS, BUT THIS RINGS HOLLOW. ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE IS CONVINCED THE CPM HAS LOST GROUND HEAVILY, INCLUDING IN LABOR SUPPORT, AND WOULD LOSE BADLY

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IN AN ELECTION.

2. ARGUMENT THAT MRS. GANDHI IS CONTEMPLATING EARLY ELECTIONS WAS MADE BY ONE OR TWO PERSONS ON GROUNDS OF HER ACTIVE WOOING OF THE KEY KERALA CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DURING HER TOUR OF THE STATE TWO WEEKS AGO AND IN HER SPEECHES IN TAMILNAD LAST WEEK.

3. CONGRESS FACTIONALISM STILL THRIVES, HOWEVER, IN KERALA AND SEVERAL IMPORTANT CONGRESS FACTIONS IN KERALA ARE INSISTENT THAT POWERFUL ANTI-COMMUNIST HOME MINISTER KARUNAKARAN SHOULD NOT BE IN OFFICE WHILE ELCTIONS ARE BEING STAGED. THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE PRESIDENT'S KLE AFTER EXPIRATION OF SIX-MONTH EXTENSION OF PRESENT KERALA GOVT IN APRIL, WITH LECTIONS IN MAY. FEW WERE BETTING THIS WOULD HAPPEN, HOWEVER, AND MOST OBSERVERS THOUGHT PRESENT GOVT WOULD BE EXTENDED TILL OCT. 1976 WITH ELECTIONS NOT BEFORE THE FALL (ASSUMING ELECTIONS AT ALL). THERE WAS GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE THESIS THAT WHENEVER SHE DECIDED TO HOLD ELECTIONS, MRS. GANDHI WOULD HOLD THE FIRST ELECTION IN KERALA AS A "BELL-WETHER," AND BECAUSE SHE EXPECTS TO DO WELL THERE.

4. THERE WAS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT KERALA HAD AN ADVANTAGE IN HAVING ALREADY IMPLEMENTED MANY OF THE 20-POINTS IN THE PM'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM, BUT THE LOCAL GOVT WAS NOT PUBLICLY BOASTING ABOUT THIS (AS THE DMK HAD IN TAMILNAD). AGRICULTURAL WAGES WERE ALREADY ABOVE THE STANDARD SET BY THE 20-POINT PROGRAM, RURAL LAND HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED, PRICES HAD ALREADY DROPPED SHARPLY, THERE WAS NO WIDESPREAD MONEY-LENDER PROBLEM (THIS WAS AGREED WITH EVEN BY OPPOSITION POLITICIANS), EDUCATION WAS WIDESPREAD (AND NOW UNBESET BY VIOLENCE AND STUDENT STRIKES), DOWRY WAS NOT AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM, ETC., ETC. THE KEY ISSUE IN KERALA WAS UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE NEW RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION PROGRAM (TARGET: 100,000 JOBS IN FOUR YEARS) WAS BEING ENERGETICALLY PUSHED BY THE BRIGHTEST AND MOST IMAGINATIVE CIVIL SERVANT IN THE KERALA BUREAUCRACY. LABOR CONTINUES SOMEWHAT RESTIVE BUT STRIKES ARE VIRTUALLY NONEXISTENT. THE ONLY PESSIMISTIC NOTE ONE HEARD WAS THAT KERALANS WERE SO INDIVIDUALISTIC AND PERVERSE THAT THEY WOULD FIND SOME WAY OF DIVIDING THEMSELVES INTO DISPUTATIOUS FACTIONS NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED.

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IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, WHILE SOME NEWSMEN GRUMBLED BITTERLY ABOUT PRESS CENSORSHIP, SOME POLITICIANS WERE DEEPLY CYNICAL ABOUT THE LOSS OF LIBERTY, ONE PROFESSOR WAS CONVINCED MRS. GANDHI WAS AIMING FOR "ONE PARTY DEMOCRACY," AND THE CPM LEADERS MURMUR ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A MILITARY COUP D'ETAT, THE PM SEEMS AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT TO HAVE KERALA IN THE PALM OF HER HAND AND THE STATE SEEMS TO ENJOY BEING THERE.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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